

House Education & the Workforce Committee

John Boehner, Chairman

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ISSUE SUMMARY

H.R. 1 Enhances Accountability

The centerpiece of President Bush's *No Child Left Behind* reform plan is flexibility and accountability -- giving states and local schools more freedom in how they use federal dollars in exchange for greater accountability for results. Washington has spent nearly \$130 billion since 1965 -- and more than \$80 billion in the past decade alone -- in a well-intentioned but unsuccessful effort to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. States and school districts must be held accountable for improving student achievement. Too often, low expectations have translated into poor results. This tacit tolerance of mediocrity has had devastating consequences.

A recent study conducted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the nation's largest bipartisan, individual membership organization of state legislators, showed that while per pupil expenditures increased nationwide by 22.8 percent in constant dollars over the past 20 years -- from \$5,087 in 1979 to \$6,251 in 1999 -- standardized test scores have shown little improvement. Clearly, money alone is not the answer to increasing student achievement. There must be *accountability* for results.

State Assessments

- H.R. 1 establishes a comprehensive accountability system, including asking states to build on their existing state assessments by designing and implementing annual math and reading tests for students in grades three through eight. The plan provides federal dollars for states to design the tests.
- The bill builds on the assessment requirements in current law in order to ensure that federal dollars are spent as effectively as possible to close the achievement gap.

Corrective Action for Low-Performing Schools and Districts

- By establishing a system of rewards and sanctions for states and school districts to hold them accountable for increasing student achievement, H.R. 1 would, for the first time, demand real results from public schools that receive federal education resources.
- Schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for one academic year will be identified by the district or state as needing improvement. The bill authorizes financial and other technical assistance to help struggling schools turn around and becoming high-quality schools and parents will have the option of sending their children to **another public school**.
- If a low-performing school does not make adequate yearly progress after three years, students in failing schools will be eligible to receive a **scholarship for a private school**, if their parents so choose.

- States that fail to show adequate yearly progress for their disadvantaged and limited English proficient students will be subject to losing a portion of their administrative funds. States that show significant progress will be rewarded.
- H.R. 1 authorizes states to provide rewards to schools (and teachers in such schools) that substantially close the achievement gap between the lowest and highest performing students.

Empowering Parents

- One of the surest ways to hold schools accountable is to help parents stay informed -- to provide them the data they need to judge precisely how well schools are doing their job.
- Consequently, H.R. 1 requires school districts to annually report to the public on the academic performance of each school in their jurisdictions. These reports must include information on how students are faring when compared to other schools in the district and across the state, graduation rates, teacher qualifications, and other important performance indicators.
- In addition to requiring school districts to provide report cards, President Bush's plan calls on states to do the same. State governments must report to the public on how students score on state assessments, how many students complete Advanced Placement courses, the percentage of students not tested, as well as other information.
- State and school district report cards bolster the Bush plan's approach to accountability: States will oversee the progress of local school districts, and local schools will be held accountable by parents empowered with the information about their child's school.
- Report cards shine the spotlight on the quality of all schools in the state. They enhance parents' ability to make informed choices about their children's education, and enable citizens to help push for change in low performing schools.
- State and school district report cards help parents judge how their local schools stack up against others in the state on the academic achievement of the school, teacher qualifications, completion and passage rates, and percentages of students graduating.
- H.R. 1 ensures that parents would have access to information about whether their child's teacher is licensed, emergency certified, the degree the teacher holds, and the field of study of the teacher. Parents would also be entitled to know whether their son or daughter is receiving services from a teacher's aide.